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Lt. William Holmes—Joseph Biddle, Pt. 2:

Samuel Loring and Nancy Loring Parks

BY LAMONT HEALY

When last we left the Holmes-Biddle land grant the property was owned by The Honorable Gamaliel Bradford (1704-1778). Bradford had obtained the property in 1734 from Thomas Loring, the son of Duxbury's first Thomas Loring (there were four of that name in a row). Most of the property passed back into the Loring name and the title became quite "muddled." Consequently the property was submitted (along with almost all the property that was later to become Bay Farm) to the Massachusetts Land Court in the late 1880s. Massachusetts is one of the few states with a Land Court. The only other state that I know of that has one is Hawaii. As the Loring family passed the property on, so too went much of their money. The first Duxbury Thomas had a brother Benjamin. It is from Benjamin that the more notable descendants were related. Benjamin's son Samuel (1747-1816) and grandson Samuel (1798-1847) retained both the property and the wealth. The third Samuel (1820-1887) and his brother, Harrison, helped establish the Loring name as leaders in the community. The third Samuel had a tack factory on Island Creek near where current resident Mr. Nudd keeps the Duxbury Dragon on display. There was a dam there, but the road was built over it. The pond on the north side of the street has had at least a couple of names: Mill Pond and Tack Factory Pond. Harrison was a shipbuilder who continued building ships into the Civil War era. He was involved in building some of the first ironclad ships for the U.S. government. Both brothers suffered through adversity, as we shall see. Samuel was the proud father of only daughter, Nancy Sprague Loring. The Sprague derived from her grandmother Nancy Sprague. Most of what we know about Nancy comes from the full-page article covering her courtship, marriage and divorce as it appeared on the Boston Sunday Post in Feb. 7, 1904. Nancy had met John Henry Parks when they were both about 13- or 14 years old. He came from Missouri and attended the Duxbury Academy. It was "then and there" that Nancy "made up her mind that she would have only this handsome and fascinating little schoolmate for her playfellow." She was described in the article as the handsomest, the most talented and the cleverest girl in Plymouth. She was talked of as the coming belle of the county.

From the beginning, Nancy's father was not enamored of young John. He ordered John to keep away from Nancy, not in so many words but by giving him the cold shoulder. When John was 18 and had just graduated from the academy he went away from Duxbury. Nobody seemed to know where he went. Rumor was he was down South. Nancy "confided to her dearest chums. He will come back. Dad will have to let him come back." Before Nancy was 21 John Parks came back to Duxbury. On May 27, 1869, her 21st birthday, Nancy Loring married John Parks in the Loring mansion.

After the marriage Samuel took his son-in-law into the company as a clerk. The two men were as different as day and night. Samuel was the "hail fellow well met" type striking up a conversation with anybody he met. Everybody knew Sam Loring. His son-in-law was another sort: brilliant, fascinating, high-strung and somewhat aloof.

As Samuel grew older his son-in-law began to take the elder man's position of prominence in the business. He formed a consolidation of all the large tack manufacturing concerns in the East. He formed a corporation that would control the manufacture of tacks and wire nails throughout the country. Later this company merged with the Atlas Tack Company with John H. Parks at its head. Samuel was heavily invested in the venture. For a while the stock of this concern was quite successful due, it was said, to the "wonderful organizing and executive ability of Parks." "Then due it was said to unskillful management the affairs of the corporation began to fail."

It was about this time in May of 1887 that Samuel took his own life while swimming at Fortress Monroe in Virginia by cutting his throat. There are some who speculate that he was murdered and thrown in the ocean. Suicide was the official cause of death. Samuel's life had seemed to be falling apart. His business was failing, and his only daughter's marriage was falling apart, you don't need much more to be suicidal.

The events that followed were disastrous for all the Loring family members. The Atlas Tack Company went into receivership. The idyllic relationship of Nancy and John was disintegrating and later the divorce was covered publically in the newspaper. The Lorings and Parks were a wealthy and successful family and as it often is with people of note, the newspapers jumped all over their adversity. John had left for New York and basically abandoned Nancy and their four children. Nancy died in March of 1923, a resident of Kingston (the Loring homestead stretched into Kingston), in the hospital at Plymouth and is buried in the Loring lot in Mayflower Cemetery. Strangely the Miramar History shows the property being transferred from "John H. Parks, a New York businessman" to the

Catholic Church, when in actuality, the deed is from Nancy S. Parks in 1911. We'll cover that next time.

We now know where Loring and Parks Streets got their name.



The Samuel Loring Mansion is now part of the Bay Farm Condominium. Built in 1883 it later became the residence of Nancy S. Loring Parks.



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